

# FOCUS AND CONSTITUENT ORDER IN TAGALOG<sup>1</sup>

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## 1.0 Introduction

Ever since Constantino's (1965) study on the different sentence patterns of Philippine languages appeared, most of the studies regarding the sentence structure only dealt with the problem in pure syntactic terms. In fact, Constantino's classic paper merely listed the different types of sentences that are found in the various Philippine languages. The most recent study on Tagalog gave an attempt on the derivations of the different sentence forms, but did not reason out why these sentence forms occur (Cena 1994). In this study, the assumptions of RRG are utilized in order to give an analysis based on the interface of syntax and pragmatics as seen in Tagalog. Assuming that focus structure affects the syntax, analyses of the different sentence forms in the language are given, in which the effect of the pragmatic factors in the syntax are clearly seen.

Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) is a theory of language that focuses on not just the syntactic factors of the language, but also on the semantic and pragmatic factors as well. This paper will thus discuss the ways in how the different factors concerning Information Structure intersect and affect the Syntactic Structure of the language.

Used by about 57 million people, Tagalog is one of the major languages spoken in the Philippines. It is a member of the Austronesian language family, in the Western Malayo-Polynesian branch. In its canonical position, it is a predicate-initial language, and it utilizes the ergative-absolutive case system.

Being a study of language in its actual use, this research has been done using two methods of data gathering. The first method used a fairly long survey, which intended to simulate a discourse fragment. A question was presented, and the respondent was asked to choose all the natural answers among all the grammatical choices. Only grammatical answers are included in the choices, however, not all are felicitous with regard to the question. The second method used a free interview. This time, pictures were shown to different respondents, and they were asked questions that pertained to the pictures. These questions were designed to have different focus types, thus, the respondents were free to use whichever sentence form they prefer.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 details out the interface of syntax and pragmatics in declarative simple sentences. Section 3 on the other hand will expand on the interface of syntax and pragmatics in interrogative simple sentences. Section 4 serves as the conclusion of this study.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on my B.A. thesis entitled *Pragmatic Focus and Sentence Form in Tagalog*, submitted to the Department of Linguistics in the University of the Philippines, Diliman, in September 2004, under the supervision of Prof. Ma. Khristina S. Manuelli.

## 2.0 The Syntax-Pragmatics Interface in Declarative Sentences

This section is divided into three parts. The first part expounds on the three types of focus constructions as proposed by Lambrecht (1994). The second part will try to revise the RRG concept of predicate focus. Evidence as seen from Tagalog suggest that there is actually a “predicate focus” in which the PSA is included in the actual focus domain. The third part will examine the possibility of a special focus position for narrow focus. Initial analyses have suggested that the clause-initial position is the default position for focus. Since Tagalog is a predicate-initial language, this means that this position would fall on the position where the predicate is usually found, the NUC. This hypothesis thus implies that any constituent that appears before the NUC but not on the LDP, in short, on the PrCS, will be a constituent receiving narrow focus.

### 2.1 Types of Focus Constructions in Tagalog

As proposed by Lambrecht (1994) and expounded by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997), there exists three focus types: sentence focus, predicate focus, and narrow focus.

In sentence focus, the speaker presupposes nothing in the discourse, implying that every constituent in the utterance is brand-new. Consider the following example.

- (1) Q:           Ano ang nangyari?  
                  what LNK<sub>PF</sub> happen-PFT  
                  ‘What happened?’
- A:     a.       Tumirik ang kotse ko.  
                  stall-PFT.AV ABS-car 1sg.GEN  
                  ‘My car stalled.’
- b.       ??Tumirik.  
                  stall-PFT.AV  
                  ‘(My car) stalled.’
- c.       #Ang kotse ko ang tumirik.  
                  ABS-car 1sg.GEN LNK<sub>PF</sub> stall-PFT.AV  
                  ‘MY CAR stalled.’
- d.       ?Ang kotse ko ay tumirik.  
                  ABS-car 1sg.GEN LNK<sub>PT</sub> stall-PFT.AV  
                  ‘My car STALLED.’
- e.       ?Ang kotse ko tumirik.  
                  ABS-car 1sg.GEN stall-PFT.AV  
                  ‘My car stalled.’
- f.       ?Ang kotse ko, tumirik.  
                  ABS-car 1sg.GEN stall-PFT.AV  
                  ‘Regarding my car, it stalled.’

This discourse fragment can be analyzed as follows.

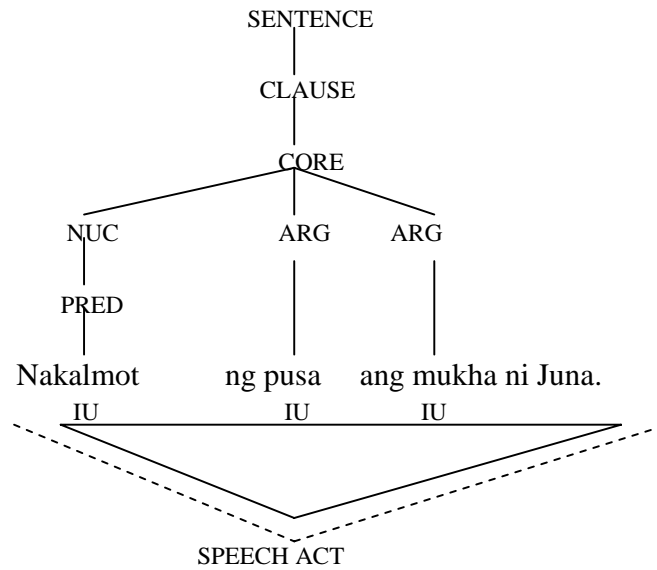
- (1') Sentence: Tumirik ang kotse ko.  
 Presupposition:  $\exists x[\mathbf{do}'(x, [\mathbf{pred}'(x, y)])]$   
 Assertion:  $\exists x[\mathbf{do}'(x, [\mathbf{break.down}'(x)])]$  where  $x = \text{ang kotse ko}$   
 Focus: 'tumirik ang kotse ko'  
 Focus domain: clause

As shown above, the most felicitous response is (1.a). This is the construction that satisfies the conditions of sentence focus, where no variables are presupposed. Thus, the focus is the whole clause, encompassing all the variables. If we examine the examples, sentence focus requires that the canonical construction be used on the sentence, with the predicate appearing before the arguments. All the other constructions, such as the ones involving dropped constituents, and the constructions that involve an argument appearing on the PrCS, is unacceptable as a reply.

Transitive sentences do not exhibit any difference with regards to sentence focus, as the following examples show.

- (2) Q: Ano ang nangyari?  
 what LNK<sub>PF</sub> happen-PFT  
 'What happened?'
- A: a. Nakalmot ng pusa ang mukha ni Juna.  
 scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat ABS-face GEN-Juna  
 'A cat scratched Juna's face.'
- b. ??Nakalmot ng pusa.  
 scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 'A cat scratched (Juna's face).'
- c. #Ang mukha ni Juna ang nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PF</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 'It was Juna's face that the cat scratched.'
- d. ?Ang mukha ni Juna ay nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PT</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 'Juna's face was SCRATCHED BY A CAT.'
- e. ?Ang mukha ni Juna nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 'A cat scratched Juna's face.'
- f. ?Ang mukha ni Juna, nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 'Regarding Juna's face, it was scratched by a cat.'

Sentence focus can thus be visually represented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Sentence Focus in Tagalog**

With regards to predicate focus, Van Valin and LaPolla (1997) note that predicate focus is the universally unmarked type of focus structure. In this focus type, there is a topic, which is contained in the presupposition, and the constituents in focus are the ones that give a comment on it. Van Valin (forthcoming) states that this topic-comment pragmatic dichotomy corresponds to the subject-predicate syntactic dichotomy, where the subject is a topic and the predicate is the comment.

The following example illustrates this focus type and how it is analyzed.

- (3) Q:           Ano ang nangyari kay Juna?  
                   what LNK<sub>PF</sub> happen-PFT DAT-Juna  
                   ‘What happened to Juna?’
- A:     a.       Nahimatay si Juna.  
                   faint-PFT.UV ABS-Juna  
                   ‘Juna fainted.’
- b.       Nahimatay.  
                   faint-PFT.UV  
                   ‘(Juna) fainted.’
- c.       #Si Juna ang nahimatay.  
                   ABS-Juna LNK<sub>PF</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
                   ‘It was Juna who fainted.’
- d.       ?Si Juna ay nahimatay.  
                   ABS-Juna LNK<sub>PT</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
                   ‘She FAINTED.’
- e.       ??Si Juna nahimatay.  
                   ABS-Juna faint-PFT.UV  
                   ‘Juna fainted.’
- f.       ?Si Juna, nahimatay.

ABS-Juna faint-PFT.UV  
 ‘Regarding Juna, she fainted.’

- (3’) Sentence: Nahimatay (si Juna).  
 Presupposition:  $\exists x[\mathbf{do}'(x, [\mathbf{pred}'(x)])]$  where  $x = \text{Juna}$   
 Assertion: **pred'** = faint  
 Focus: ‘nahimatay’  
 Focus domain: predicating element

Most of the respondents actually prefer the “incomplete” sentence form, where the presupposed constituent is actually dropped from the sentence. Since the argument of the sentence is already known to the speakers, the reply doesn’t require it to be stated again. Thus, (3.b) is the most preferred construction. However, (3.d, 3.f) are also used frequently. Even though these constructions are marked with a “?”, this can still be explained. Here, the linker *ay* is marked as a post-topical linker. Contrasted with the other linker *ang*, the post-topical linker is a linker that appears when an argument appears in front of the predicating element. Remember that in Tagalog, the predicating element appears as the first constituent in a canonical word order. If for some reason, the first constituent is not the predicate, there might be a pause, or a linker, that is inserted between the predicate and the argument. By inserting a pause, the argument takes the LDP and is thus outside the PFD, since the LDP is not the scope of the PFD. If a linker is inserted, the linker may be *ang* or *ay*. The assumption here is that *ang* is a post-focal linker, while *ay* is a post-topical linker. In other words, the LNK<sub>PF</sub> is used when the argument at the beginning of the sentence is in narrow focus. The LNK<sub>PT</sub> on the other hand, is used when the argument at the beginning of the sentence is the topic and is not in focus.

Some speakers use pronouns in place of the arguments in the constructions that involve a post-topical linker. This is because that argument is already presupposed, and stating it once more wouldn’t be economical. Thus, replacing it with a pronoun is permissible.

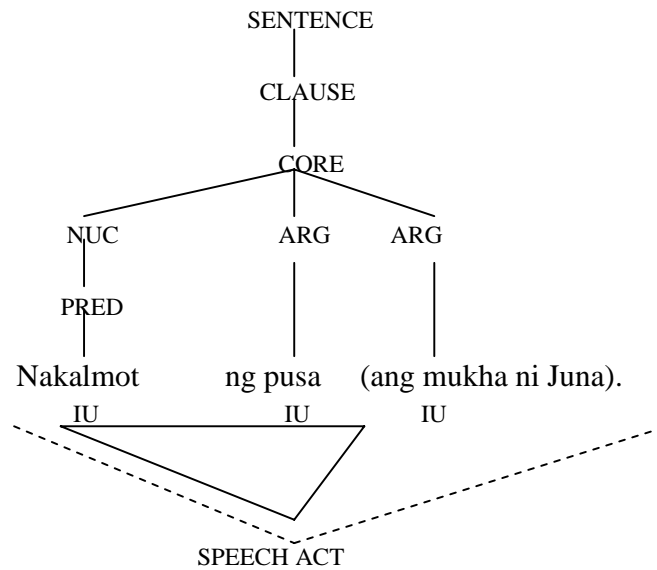
This analysis of the linker *ay* is different from traditional analyses of Tagalog sentence constructions. Analyses based on purely syntactic terms treat this as simple variations with the same semantic content. Called *ay*-preposing, this is treated as a simple inversion of arguments and predicates. However, as the data indicates, a consideration of the pragmatic factors of the language indicate that there is a difference in usage of the said constructions. The constructions involving the post-topical linker has a different focus structure compared to the constructions using the canonical order.

As the following examples show, the same is the case for transitive sentences.

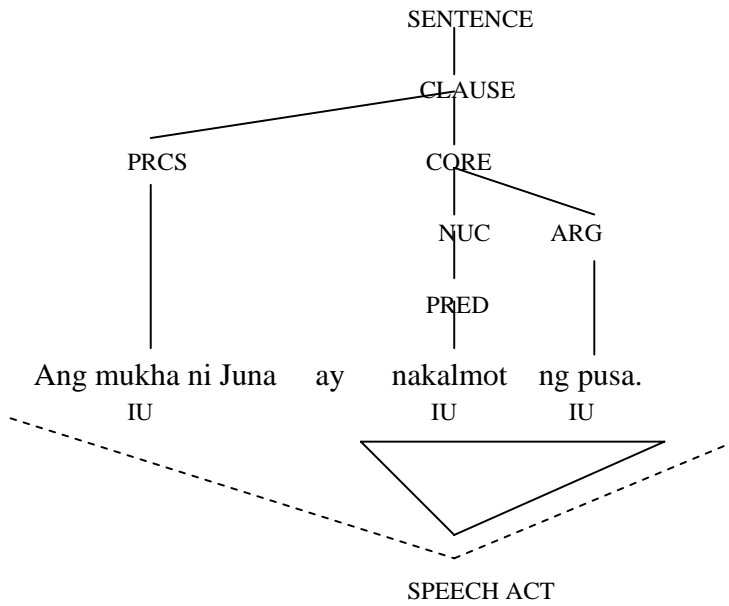
- (4) Q: Ano ang nangyari sa mukha ni Juna?  
 what LNK<sub>PF</sub> happen-PFT DAT-face GEN-Juna  
 ‘What happened to Juna’s face?’  
 A: a. Nakalmot ng pusa ang mukha ni Juna.

- scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat ABS-face GEN-Juna  
 ‘A cat scratched Juna’s face.’
- b. Nakalmot ng pusa.  
 scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 ‘A cat scratched (Juna’s face).’
- c. #Ang mukha ni Juna ang nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PF</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 ‘It was Juna’s face that the cat scratched.’
- d. ?Ang mukha ni Juna ay nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PT</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 ‘Juna’s face was scratched by a cat.’
- e. ??Ang mukha ni Juna nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 ‘A cat scratched Juna’s face.’
- f. ?Ang mukha ni Juna, nakalmot ng pusa.  
 ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
 ‘Regarding Juna’s face, it was scratched by a cat.’

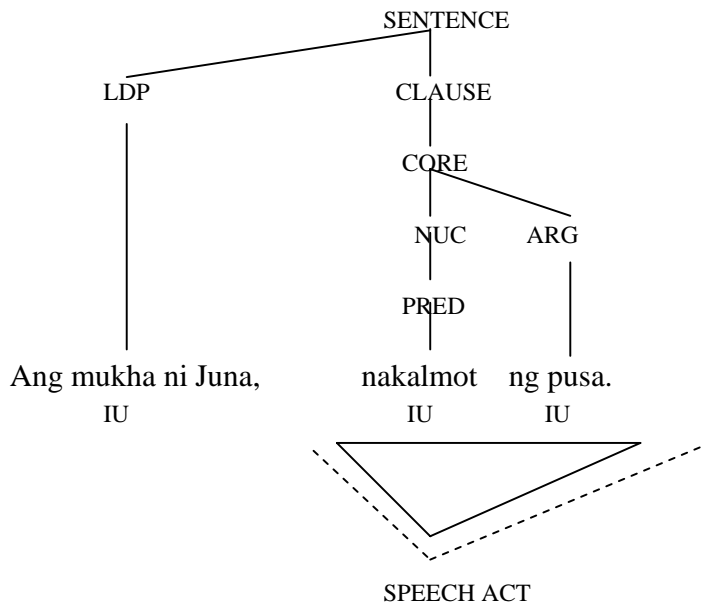
The following are the visual representations of the three types of predicate focus.



**Figure 2: Predicate Focus in Tagalog (canonical construction)**



**Figure 3: Predicate Focus in Tagalog (argument in PrCS)**



**Figure 4: Predicate Focus in Tagalog (argument in LDP)**

The final focus type is narrow focus. Only one constituent is focused this time, and the following discourse fragment illustrate this in the Tagalog language.

- (5) Q: Nabalitaan ko na tumirik daw ang motor mo.  
 overhear-PFT 1sg.ERG CLM stall-PFT.AV EVID ABS-motorcycle  
 2sg.GEN  
 ‘I’ve heard that your motorcycle stalled.’
- A: a. ?Tumirik ang kotse ko.  
 stall-PFT.AV ABS-car 1sg.GEN  
 ‘My car stalled.’
- b. ??Tumirik.  
 stall-PFT.AV  
 ‘(My car) stalled.’
- c. Ang kotse ko ang tumirik.  
 ABS-car 1sg.GEN LNK<sub>PF</sub> stall-PFT.AV  
 ‘It was my car that stalled.’
- d. #Ang kotse ko ay tumirik.  
 ABS-car 1sg.GEN LNK<sub>PT</sub> stall-PFT.AV  
 ‘My car STALLED.’
- e. ??Ang kotse ko tumirik.  
 ABS-car 1sg.GEN stall-PFT.AV  
 ‘My car stalled.’
- f. ?Ang kotse ko, tumirik.  
 ABS-car 1sg.GEN stall-PFT.AV  
 ‘Regarding my car, it stalled.’

- (5’) Sentence: Ang kotse ko ang tumirik.  
 Presupposition:  $\exists x[\text{do}'(x, [\text{break.down}'(x)])]$   
 Assertion:  $x = \text{ang kotse ko}$   
 Focus: ‘ang kotse ko’  
 Focus domain: referential phrase

As shown above, the most felicitous reply is (5.c). It is a sentence form that has an argument, the focused one, in the clause-initial position, and the post-focal linker *ang* is inserted between the focused argument and the predicating element. Again, this shows the functional difference of the linkers *ang* and *ay*. The former is used in narrow focus, when an argument appears on the clause-initial position to show its focused status. The latter is used in predicate focus, when an argument appears on the clause-initial position to serve as a topic, while the predicate following it is in focus.

The same is the case for transitive sentences, as the following discourse fragment shows.

- (6) Q: Nabalitaan ko na nakalmot daw ng pusa ang kamay ni Juna.  
 overhear-PFT 1sg.ERG CLM scratch-PFT.UV EVID ERG-cat ABS-hand  
 GEN-Juna  
 ‘I’ve heard that a cat scratched Juna’s hand.’
- A: a. ?Nakalmot ng pusa ang mukha ni Juna.  
 scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat ABS-face GEN-Juna



- ‘A cat scratched Juna’s face.’
- b. ??Nakalmot ng pusa.  
scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
‘A cat scratched (Juna’s face).’
- c. Ang mukha ni Juna ang nakalmot ng pusa.  
ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PF</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
‘It was Juna’s face that the cat scratched.’
- d. #Ang mukha ni Juna ay nakalmot ng pusa.  
ABS-face GEN-Juna LNK<sub>PT</sub> scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
‘Juna’s face was scratched by a cat.’
- e. ??Ang mukha ni Juna nakalmot ng pusa.  
ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
‘A cat scratched Juna’s face.’
- f. ?Ang mukha ni Juna, nakalmot ng pusa.  
ABS-face GEN-Juna scratch-PFT.UV ERG-cat  
‘Regarding Juna’s face, it was scratched by a cat.’

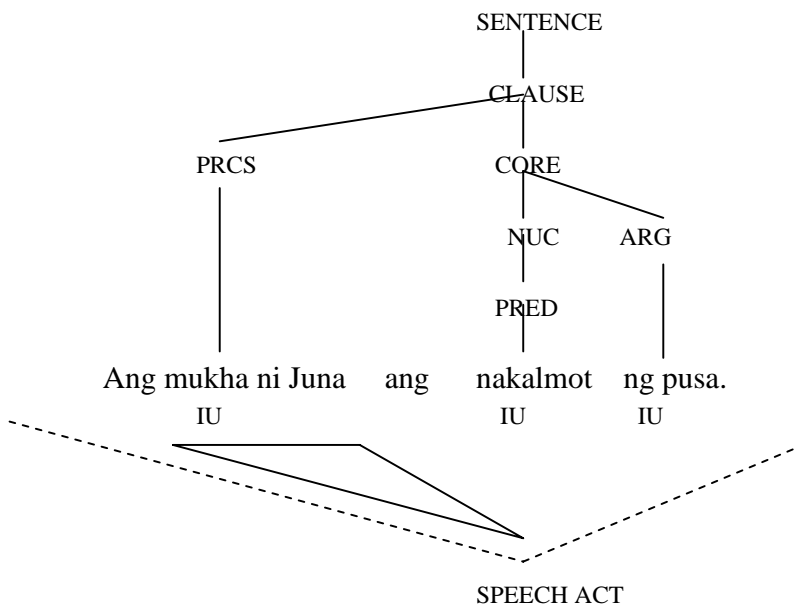
It must be noted that not only core constituents can be subjected to narrow focus but also peripheral constituents as well. Consider the following discourse fragment.

- (7) Q: Kailan sinuntok ni Ronald si Mark?  
when punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald ABS-Mark  
‘When did Ronald punch Mark?’
- A: a. Sinuntok ni Ronald si Mark kahapon.  
punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald ABS-Mark yesterday  
‘Ronald punched Mark yesterday.’
- b. Sinuntok kahapon ni Ronald si Mark.  
punch-PFT.UV yesterday ERG-Ronald ABS-Mark  
‘Ronald punched Mark yesterday.’
- c. Kahapon sinuntok ni Ronald si Mark.  
yesterday punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald ABS-Mark  
‘Ronald punched Mark YESTERDAY.’
- d. ?Kahapon ni Ronald sinuntok si Mark.  
yesterday ERG-Ronald punch-PFT.UV ABS-Mark  
‘Ronald punched Mark yesterday.’
- e. #Si Mark ang kahapon sinuntok ni Ronald.  
ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> yesterday punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald  
‘It was Mark whom Ronald punched yesterday.’
- f. ??Si Mark ay kahapon sinuntok ni Ronald.  
ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PT</sub> yesterday punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald  
‘Mark was punched by Ronald yesterday.’
- g. #Si Mark kahapon sinuntok ni Ronald.  
ABS-Mark yesterday punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald  
‘Ronald punched Mark yesterday.’
- h. ??Si Mark, kahapon sinuntok ni Ronald.  
ABS-Mark yesterday punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald

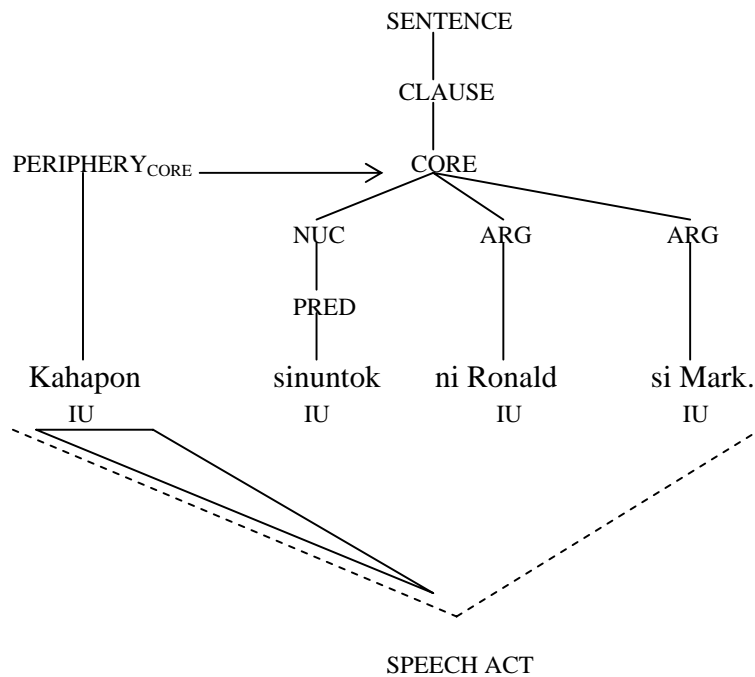
- ‘Regarding Mark, he was punched by Ronald yesterday.’
- i. #Si Mark ang sinuntok ni Ronald kahapon.  
 ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald yesterday  
 ‘It was Mark whom Ronald punched yesterday.’
- j. ??Si Mark ay sinuntok ni Ronald kahapon.  
 ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PT</sub> punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald yesterday  
 ‘Mark was punched by Ronald yesterday.’
- k. #Si Mark sinuntok ni Ronald kahapon.  
 ABS-Mark punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald yesterday  
 ‘Ronald punched Mark yesterday.’
- l. #Si Mark, sinuntok ni Ronald kahapon.  
 ABS-Mark punch-PFT.UV ERG-Ronald yesterday  
 ‘Regarding Mark, he was punched by Ronald yesterday.’

The above examples show three felicitous constructions for peripheral narrow focus. Normally, the periphery appears after the arguments, but since it is in focus, it is allowed to appear on the clause-initial position. The other constructions which have the periphery in a non-initial position is made felicitous due to accent placement. This is tackled in the third part of this section.

The following are visual representations of argument and peripheral narrow focus in Tagalog.



**Figure 5: Narrow Focus in Tagalog (argument in PrCS)**



**Figure 6: Narrow Focus of a Peripheral Constituent**

To sum up, the three focus types as proposed by Lambrecht, namely, sentence focus, predicate focus, and narrow focus, all appear to be valid after being tested using data from Tagalog. However, there are certain data that seem to be unexplainable using these three focus types. Certain constructions seem to exhibit properties that do not fit in these three focus types alone. These constructions will be expounded by the second part of this section.

## 2.2 Predicate Focus Revisited

As stated before, predicate focus is the universally unmarked focus type characterised by a construction that has a topic, a pragmatic relation, which coincides with the PSA, a syntactic relation (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997). The focus, which is another pragmatic relation, coincides with the predicate, in other words, the predicating element plus the remaining arguments that are not PSA. This focus type is illustrated by the following felicitous discourse fragments.

- (8) Q:           Ano ang ginagawa ng lalaki?  
                   what LNK<sub>PF</sub> do-IMPF.UV ERG-man  
                   ‘What is the man doing?’
- A:     a.       Tumatakbo.  
                   run-IMPF.AV  
                   ‘(He is) running.’
- b.       Tumutugtog ng piano.  
                   play-IMPF.AV ERG-piano

- ‘(He is) playing the piano.’
- c. Umiinom ng alak.  
 drink-IMPF.AV ERG-wine  
 ‘(He is) drinking wine.’

All of these felicitous constructions form a VP-like grouping. In generative grammar, these VP-like groupings form the predicate, thus the term predicate focus, since the syntactic subject is excluded from the AFD. However, not all constructions exhibit this VP-like grouping in Tagalog. Consider the following examples.

- (9) Q: Ano ang ginawa ng lalaki?  
 what LNK<sub>PF</sub> do-PFT.UV ERG-man  
 ‘What did the man do?’
- A: a. Nagbasa ng libro.  
 read-PFT.AV ERG-book  
 ‘(He) read a book.’
- a’. Binasa ang libro.  
 read-PFT.UV ABS-book  
 ‘(He) read the book.’
- b. Umakyat sa bundok.  
 climb-PFT.AV DAT-mountain  
 ‘(He) climbed a mountain.’
- b’. Inakyat ang bundok.  
 climb-PFT.UV ABS-mountain  
 ‘(He) climbed the mountain.’
- c. Uminom ng tubig.  
 drink-PFT.AV ERG-water  
 ‘(He) drank water.’
- c’. #Ininom ang tubig.  
 drink-PFT.UV ABS-water  
 ‘(He) drank the water.’
- d. #Nagbuhat ng sanggol.  
 carry-PFT.AV ERG-baby  
 ‘(He) carried babies.’
- d’. Binuhat ang sanggol.  
 carry-PFT.UV ABS-baby  
 ‘(He) carried the baby.’

The above pairs of replies are similar to Lambrecht (1994)’s and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997)’s examples of predicate focus. But with regards to the primed examples, the predicating elements are undergoer voice. Since all of these examples take *lalaki* to be the actor, the examples that utilize a predicating element in the undergoer voice must have the undergoer as its PSA, or in traditional terms, subject. If the subject is included in the focus domain, it is violating the definition of “predicate focus,” since this focus type takes a VP-like grouping, the predicate, to be its focus domain.

Aside from that, the pairs of examples above may seem to be just a modulation of voice, but careful scrutiny tells otherwise. In (9a), the sentence doesn't imply that the reader finished reading the book, while (9a') implies that the book was read from cover to cover. The same goes to (9b), which merely says that some entity climbed a mountain but never implied whether that entity reached the top or not, while (9b') clearly implies that an entity climbed a mountain and reached the top. The example (9c') is infelicitous, unless there is a specific amount of water that has been activated in earlier discourse, in other words, referential. On the other hand, (9d) is infelicitous unless there is a context in which there are plenty of babies, and thus, non-referential. Having this semantic difference can present a challenge to the RRG definition of predicate focus.

In order to explain this, the semantic difference between the two voices must be first explained. Ricardo Ma. Nolasco (personal communication) has pointed out that Tagalog doesn't just have a simple variable voice system. He said that a predicating element with actor voice is actually different from the predicating element with an undergoer voice at the semantic level, more specifically, regarding the predicate's transitivity. According to him, predicates in the actor voice are intransitive, while predicates in the undergoer voice are transitive (Nolasco 2003). Thus, in this viewpoint, the arguments in the above unprimed examples aren't really arguments at all, since the predicate is an intransitive predicate. On the other hand, the primed examples show transitive predicates, since they utilize the undergoer voice. That is why there is a semantic difference between the pairs.

RRG however, treats this problem differently. RRG posits different verb classes, each one with its own way of lexical decomposition. With this in mind, it might be said that predicates in the actor voice are an activity predicate, while predicates in the undergoer voice are an active accomplishment predicate. Thus, if the example in (9a, a') are lexically decomposed, it would be like in (10).

- (10) a.     **do'**(lalaki,[**read'**(lalaki, libro)])  
       a'.     **do'**(lalaki,[**read'**(lalaki, libro)]) & BECOME **read'**(libro)

This thus implies that predicates in the undergoer voice in Tagalog are actually an active accomplishment, which is an accomplishment use of an activity predicate. This can thus account for the differences in the above examples.

Going back to pragmatic focus, the notion of "predicate focus" cannot be an appropriate term for an intermediate multi-constituent focus construction. Tagalog certainly exhibits constructions where there isn't a VP-like quasi-predicate grouping, as the modulation of voice certainly have consequences that must be explained. There must be a focus construction that can account for the focus type where a PSA is included in the focus domain, yet still doesn't include the whole clause in the domain.

With this in mind, it is proposed here to revise the notion of "predicate focus" to become "multiple focus". Multiple focus is a focus type that allows many constituents to be in its actually focus domain, yet it doesn't take the whole clause as its domain. It can

be thought of as an intermediate, mid-level focus type between narrow focus and sentence focus. Multiple focus also doesn't restrict the PSA from appearing in the focus domain. By doing so, the primed examples in (9) can thus be explained. This now results in a new set of focus types, namely: narrow focus, which pertains to the focus type in which only one constituent is in focus, be it an argument or a periphery; multiple focus, which pertains to a multiple-constituent focus type, but at the same time, it doesn't enclose the whole clause in its domain; and sentence focus, which pertains to the focus type where all the constituents in the clause are under focus.

### 2.3 Designating a Special Position for Narrow Focus

As the examples above show, most of the constructions with narrow focus utilize the clause-initial position as the locus of the narrow focus, both for arguments and peripheries. However, as seen by the felicity of the constructions in (7.a,b), not all instances of narrow focus are found at the beginning of the clause. The construction on (7.a), especially, has no difference whatsoever with a construction utilizing sentence focus, since it has the canonical predicate-initial construction. However, Selkirk (1996) proposes a rule regarding accent placement and focus marking (in Selkirk's terms, F-marking). Her rules on F-Assignment are as follows (quoted in Schwarzschild 1999).

- (11) F-Assignment Rules
- a. **Basic F Rule**  
An accented word is F-marked.
  - b. **F Projection**
    - 1) F-marking of the *head* of a phrase licenses the F-marking of the phrase.
    - 2) F-marking of an *internal argument* of a head licenses the F-marking of the head.

Even though this study didn't use any acoustic analysis to study the accent of the individual words, it could still be discerned which word was in focus and thus have an accent. By looking at the presupposed constituents, one could see in (7.a) that it is only logical to put the focus on the periphery, since it is the only constituent that isn't presupposed.

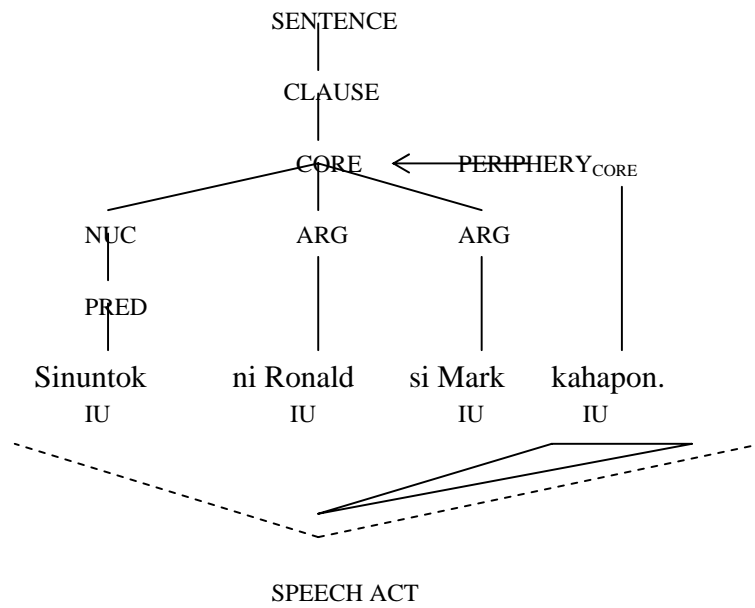
Aside from this, there are instances in which not only peripheries but also arguments can also have narrow focus but not be in the clause-initial position. This can be possible if these focused arguments are not the PSA of the sentence. Consider the following examples.

- (12) Q: Kumain ng ano si Mark?  
eat-PFT.AV ERG-what ABS-Mark  
'Mark ate what?'
- A: a. Kumain ng pansit si Mark.  
eat-PFT.AV ERG-noodles ABS-Mark  
'Mark ate NOODLES.'

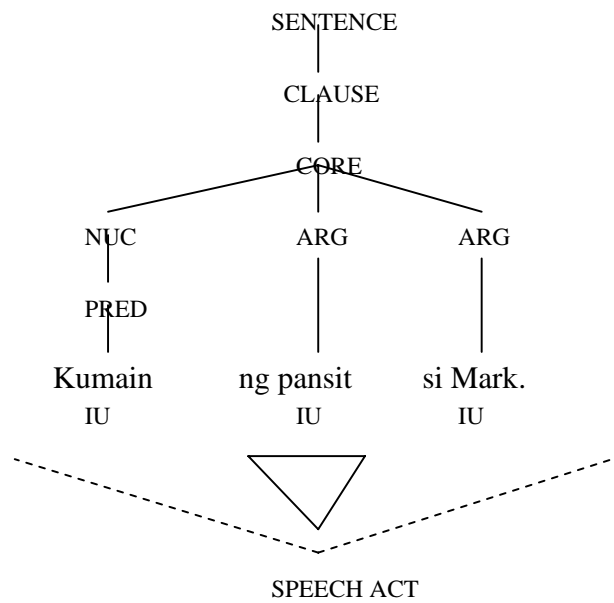
- b. #Si Mark ang kumain ng pansit.  
ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> eat-PFT.AV ERG-noodles  
'It was Mark who ate noodles.'
- c. ?Si Mark ay kumain ng pansit.  
ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PT</sub> eat-PFT.AV ERG-noodles  
'Mark ate noodles.'
- d. ??Si Mark kumain ng pansit.  
ABS-Mark eat-PFT.AV ERG-noodles  
'Mark ate noodles.'
- e. ??Si Mark, kumain ng pansit.  
'Regarding Mark, he ate noodles.'  
ABS-Mark eat-PFT.AV ERG-noodles
- f. ?Pansit ang kinain ni Mark.  
ABS-noodles LNK<sub>PF</sub> eat-PFT.UV ERG-Mark  
'Noodles was what Mark ate.'

In this above discourse fragment, the focused constituent in the question, the WH-word, is not the PSA of the construction. Thus, the reply must exhibit narrow focus, but since it is not the PSA, it cannot appear on the clause-initial position. There is no choice but to retain the canonical predicate-initial sentence form. And as (12.f) shows, the option to modulate the PSA and make the focused constituent the PSA or the reply doesn't result in a felicitous sentence either. This is because of the difference of the Aktionsart verb class between an actor voice predicate and an undergoer voice predicate.

To sum up, most of the constituents with narrow focus are found on the clause-initial position, as long as they are the PSA of the sentence. Focused peripheries can be seen at any position within their scope, since they are not constrained by rules on word order. However, there is variation of the position of the narrow focus if the focused constituent is not the PSA of the sentence. There is no choice for these constructions but to retain the canonical order of the sentence. However, it is still found that these non-clause-initial focused constituents still satisfy certain rules such as Selkirk's F-Assignment rules, in order for the constituent to be in focus. The following are the visual representation of the narrow focus construction that is not found in the clause-initial position.



**Figure 7: Narrow Focus on a Non-Clause Initial Periphery**



**Figure 8: Narrow Focus on a non-PSA Argument**

Thus, it might be said that Tagalog has a flexible focus position. It may be found on different areas of the clause, provided that it satisfy certain restrictions regarding its status as a focused constituent.



### 3.0 The Syntax-Pragmatics Interface in Interrogative Sentences

This section is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the interface of syntax and pragmatics in WH-Questions. The second part will expand on the interface of syntax and pragmatics in Yes/No-Questions. Mainly, this part concerns itself on the scope of negation. It is assumed that a certain constituent can only be negated if it is in the AFD of the interrogative sentence.

#### 3.1 WH-Questions

To start with, consider the following examples.

- (13) Q: Sino ang nahimatay?  
ABS-who LNK<sub>PF</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
'Who fainted?'
- A: a. ?Nahimatay si Juna.  
faint-PFT.UV ABS-Juna  
'Juna fainted.'
- b. Si Juna.  
ABS-Juna  
'Juna did.'
- c. ?Si Juna ang nahimatay.  
ABS-Juna LNK<sub>PF</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
'It was Juna who fainted.'
- d. #Si Juna ay nahimatay.  
ABS-Juna LNK<sub>PT</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
'Juna fainted.'
- e. ??Si Juna nahimatay.  
ABS-Juna faint-PFT.UV  
'Juna fainted.'
- f. ?Si Juna, nahimatay.  
ABS-Juna faint-PFT.UV  
'Regarding Juna, she fainted.'

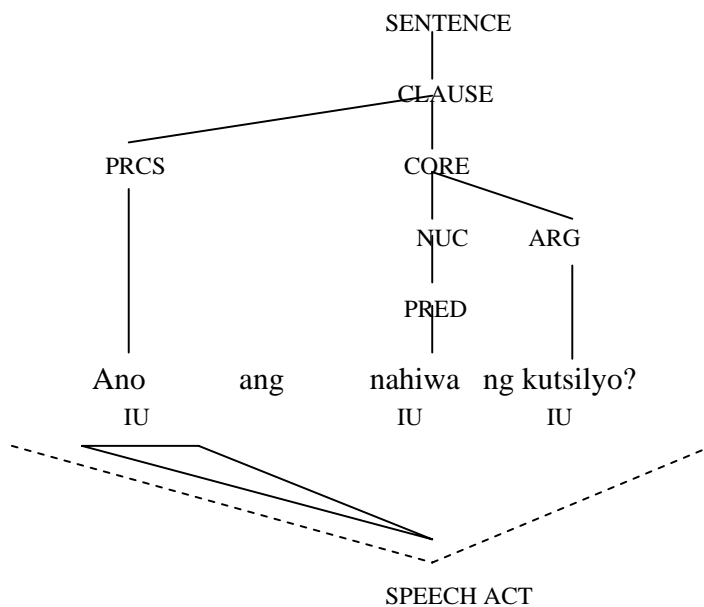
The WH-word in the interrogative sentence is in narrow focus. This fact is also supported by the presence of the post-focal linker *ang* after the WH-word. Based on the data, the most felicitous reply is (13.b), dropping all the other constituents and leaving only the element that is not presupposed. This can be analyzed as follows.

- (13') Sentence: Sino ang nahimatay?  
Presupposition:  $\exists x[\mathbf{do}'(x, [\mathbf{faint}'(x)])]$   
Assertion:  $x = \text{sino}$   
Focus: 'sino'  
Focus domain: WH-word

This is the case for intransitive sentences. The same is the case for transitive sentences, as the following discourse fragment shows.

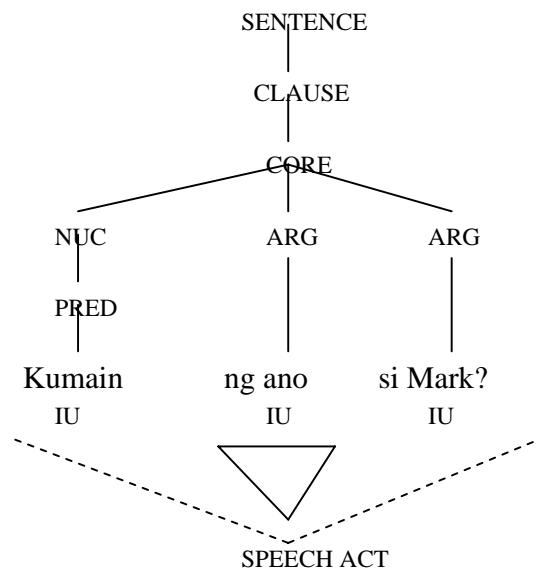
- (14) Q:           Ano       ang nahiwa   ng kutsilyo?  
 ABS-what LNK<sub>PF</sub> cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife  
 ‘What did the knife cut?’
- A:    a.       ?Nahiwa   ng kutsilyo ang daliri   ni Mark.  
 cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife   ABS-finger GEN-Mark  
 ‘The knife cut Mark’s finger.’
- b.       Ang daliri   ni Mark.  
 ABS-finger GEN-Mark  
 ‘(The knife cut) Mark’s finger.’
- c.       ?Ang daliri ni Mark ang nahiwa   ng kutsilyo.  
 ABS-finger GEN-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife  
 ‘It was Mark’s finger which the knife cut.’
- d.       #Ang daliri ni Mark ay    nahiwa   ng kutsilyo.  
 ABS-finger GEN-Mark LNK<sub>PT</sub> cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife  
 ‘Mark’s finger was cut by a knife.’
- e.       ??Ang daliri ni Mark nahiwa   ng kutsilyo.  
 ABS-finger GEN-Mark cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife  
 ‘Mark’s finger was cut by a knife.’
- f.       ?Ang daliri ni Mark, nahiwa   ng kutsilyo.  
 ABS-finger GEN-Mark cut-PFT.UV ERG-knife  
 ‘Regarding Mark’s finger, it was cut by a knife.’

The following is a visual representation of the narrow focus construction involving a WH-word.



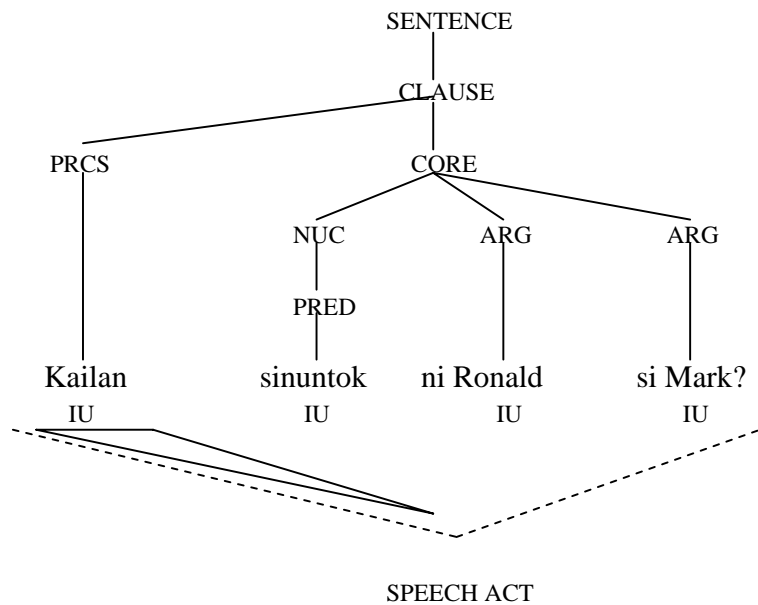
**Figure 9: Narrow Focus in a WH-Question**

However, not all WH-words appear at the clause-initial position. If the WH-word is the PSA of the sentence, then it will appear at the beginning of the sentence. But if it is not the PSA, then it will appear on its original clause-internal position, as the above examples in (12) shows. Narrow focus can also appear clause-internally on interrogative sentences, provided that it is not the PSA of the construction. The following is a visual representation of this focus type.



**Figure 10: Narrow Focus in a non-PSA WH-Question**

Peripheral WH-Questions, on the other hand, can appear on the clause-initial position, even if they are not the PSA. This is illustrated by the above example on (7). This is visually represented in the following figure.



**Figure 11: Narrow Focus in a Peripheral WH-Question**

To sum up, this section has explained that WH-Questions are instances of narrow focus. Their position is not restricted to a clause-initial position, but can appear in any place in the clause, provided that they satisfy certain restrictions. An argument WH-word only appears at the clause-initial PrCS if it is a PSA, and it appears on its canonical clause-internal position if it is not the PSA. A peripheral WH-word can appear on the PrCS but is not obliged to do so. Wherever it may appear, it still is in focus. All of these are instances of the narrow focus type.

### 3.2 Yes/No Questions

This subsection is further divided in two. The first part will deal with Yes/No Questions that have canonical word order. These questions are the ones that retain the predicate-initial word order. The second part deals with Yes/No Questions that do not have canonical word order. These are the questions that exhibit fronted constituents. In other words, there are the interrogative sentences that make use of the PrCS in the LSC.

#### 3.2.1 Yes/No Questions with Canonical Word Order

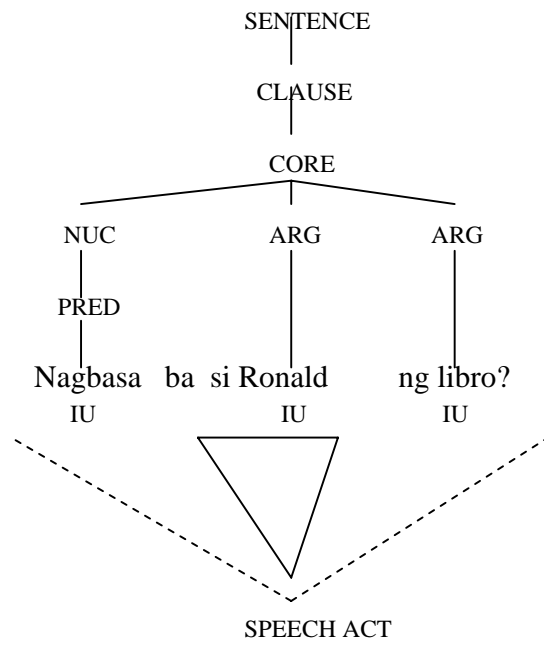
To start, consider the following examples.

- (15) Q: Nahimatay ba si Juna?  
 faint-PFT.UV Q ABS-Juna  
 ‘Did Juna faint?’
- A: a. Hindi, si Lara ang nahimatay.  
 NEG ABS-Lara LNK<sub>PF</sub> faint-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, it was Lara who fainted.’

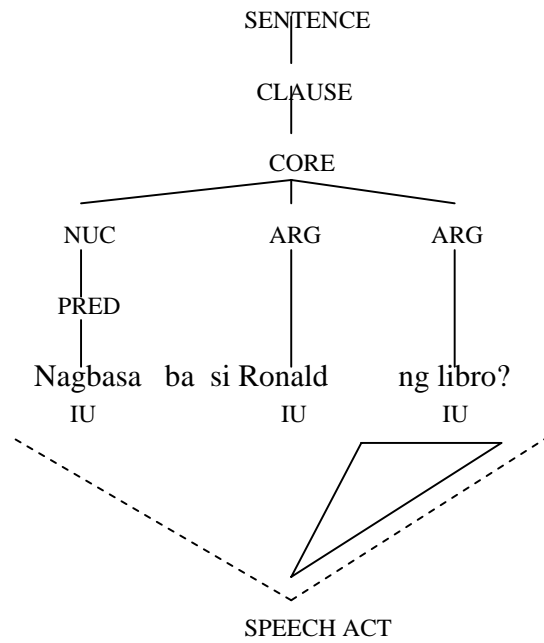
- b. Hindi, nadapa si Juna pero hindi siya nahimatay.  
 NEG trip-PFT.UV ABS-Juna but NEG 3sg.ABS faint-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, she tripped but she didn’t faint.’
- c. #Hindi, si Lara ang nadapa.  
 NEG ABS-Lara LNK<sub>PF</sub> trip-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, it was Lara who tripped.’
- (16) Q: Nagbasa ba si Ronald ng libro?  
 read-PFT.AV Q ABS-Ronald ERG-book  
 ‘Did Ronald read a book?’
- A: a. Hindi, si Mark ang nagbasa ng libro.  
 NEG ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-book  
 ‘No, it was Mark who read a book.’
- b. Hindi, magazine ang binasa niya.  
 NEG ABS-magazine LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.UV 3sg.ERG  
 ‘No, he read a magazine.’
- c. Hindi, pumunta siya sa aklatan pero hindi siya nagbasa.  
 NEG go-PFT.AV 3sg.ABS DAT-library but NEG 3sg.ABS read-PFT.AV  
 ‘No, he went to the library but he didn’t read.’
- d. #Hindi, si Mark ang nagbasa ng magazine.  
 NEG ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-magazine  
 ‘No, it was Mark who read a magazine.’

The above examples are discourse fragments of intransitive and transitive Yes/No Questions. As the examples show, there are many felicitous replies for the question. However, the final replies are clearly infelicitous. In all the felicitous replies, the construction uses narrow focus. As Eschenberg (1999) points out, the constituent that is being negated is the constituent which receives focus in the original question. And since there are numerous felicitous replies, it can be discerned that the focus in the interrogative question is variable.

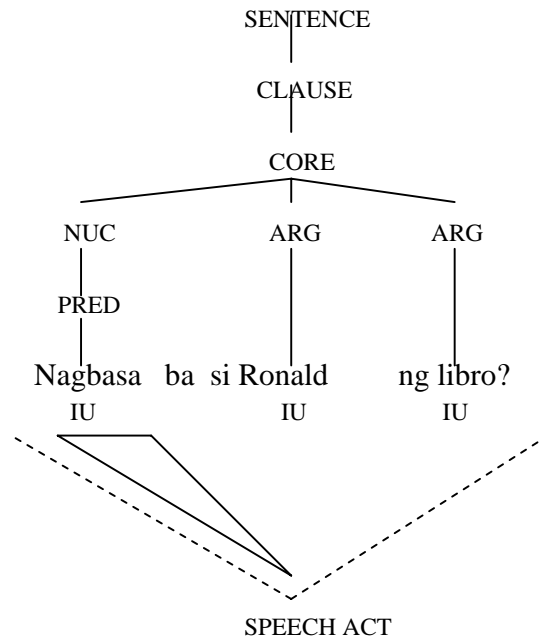
This variability of focus in the interrogative sentence results in the variable felicitous replies. Depending on the focused constituent in the question, the answer changes to accommodate the required focus of the question. However, as can be discerned by the infelicitous replies, a multiple focus construction is impossible in interrogative sentences, since changing two constituents only result in infelicity. The following visual representations illustrate the variable positions of narrow focus in the Yes/No Question.



**Figure 12: Narrow Focus on a Yes/No Question (focus on PSA)**



**Figure 13: Narrow Focus on a Yes/No Question (focus on non-PSA argument)**



**Figure 14: Narrow Focus on a Yes/No Question (focus on predicate)**

### 3.2.2 Yes/No Questions with Non-Canonical Word Order

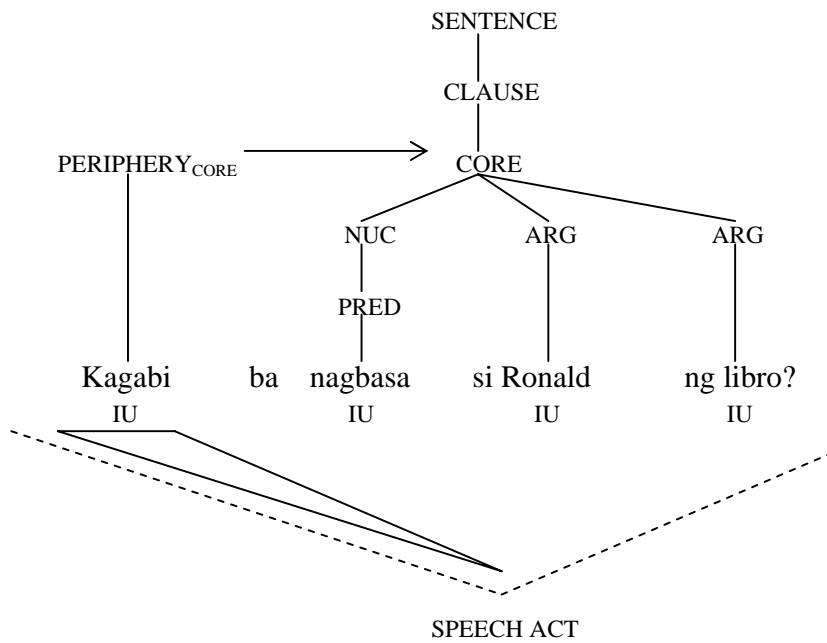
Yes/No Questions with non-canonical word order pertain to sentences that do not begin with the predicate. To begin with, consider the following examples.

- (17) Q: Nagbasa ba si Ronald ng libro kagabi?  
 read-PFT.AV Q ABS-Ronald ERG-book last.night  
 ‘Did Ronald read a book last night?’
- A: a. Hindi, nagbasa siya ng libro kanina.  
 NEG read-PFT.AV 3sg.ABS ERG-book a.while.ago  
 ‘No, he read a book a while ago.’
- b. Hindi, si Mark ang nagbasa ng libro kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-book last.night  
 ‘No, it was Mark who read a book last night.’
- c. Hindi, magazine ang binasa niya kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-magazine LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.UV 3sg.ERG last.night  
 ‘No, he read a magazine last night.’
- d. Hindi, may libro siya kagabi pero hindi niya binasa.  
 NEG exist book 3sg.ABS last.night but NEG 3sg.ERG read-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, he had a book last night but he didn’t read it.’
- (18) Q: Kagabi ba nagbasa si Ronald ng libro?  
 last.night Q read-PFT.AV ABS-Ronald ERG-book  
 ‘Did Ronald read a book LAST NIGHT?’
- A: a. Hindi, kanina siya nagbasa ng libro.

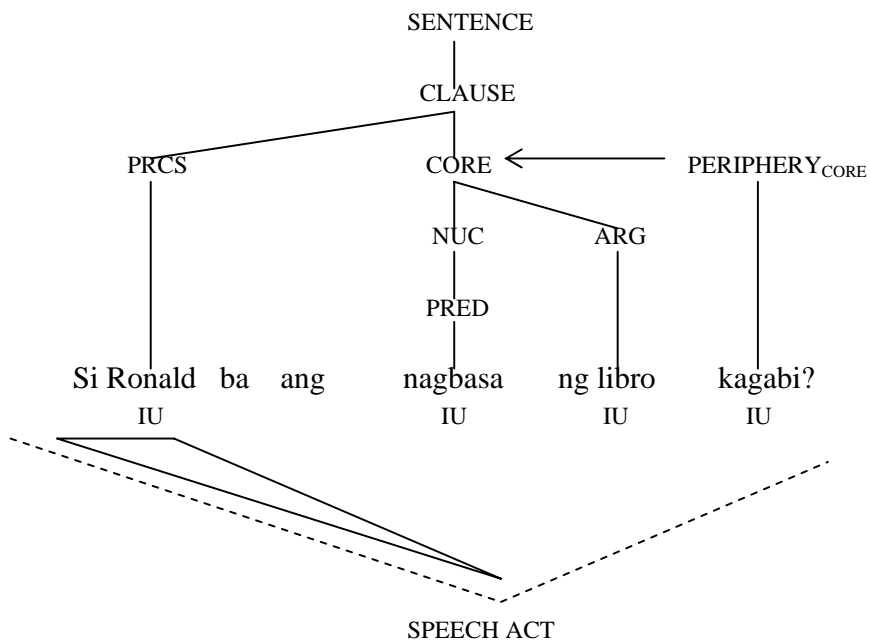
- NEG a.while.ago 3sg.ABS read-PFT.AV ERG-book  
 ‘No, he read a book A WHILE AGO.’
- b. #Hindi, si Mark ang nagbasa ng libro kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-book last.night  
 ‘No, it was Mark who read a book last night.’
- c. #Hindi, magazine ang binasa niya kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-magazine LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.UV 3sg.ERG last.night  
 ‘No, he read a magazine last night.’
- d. #Hindi, may libro siya kagabi pero hindi niya binasa.  
 NEG exist book 3sg.ABS last.night but NEG 3sg.ERG read-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, he had a book last night but he didn’t read it.’
- (19) Q: Si Ronald ba ang nagbasa ng libro kagabi?  
 ABS-Ronald Q LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-book last.night  
 ‘Was Ronald the one who read a book last night?’
- A: a. #Hindi, kanina siya nagbasa ng libro.  
 NEG a.while.ago 3sg.ABS read-PFT.AV ERG-book  
 ‘No, he read a book A WHILE AGO.’
- b. Hindi, si Mark ang nagbasa ng libro kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-Mark LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.AV ERG-book last.night  
 ‘No, it was Mark who read a book last night.’
- c. #Hindi, magazine ang binasa niya kagabi.  
 NEG ABS-magazine LNK<sub>PF</sub> read-PFT.UV 3sg.ERG last.night  
 ‘No, he read a magazine last night.’
- d. #Hindi, may libro siya kagabi pero hindi niya binasa.  
 NEG exist book 3sg.ABS last.night but NEG 3sg.ERG read-PFT.UV  
 ‘No, he had a book last night but he didn’t read it.’

The examples on (17) illustrate a question with canonical word order. Thus, all the replies are felicitous. However, the examples on (18) and (19) differ in the sense that the first constituent is not the predicate. The clause-initial constituents are a periphery, as seen in (18), and an argument in the PrCS, as seen in (19). In these cases, the focus position is not variable in the question. The only felicitous reply is the one that has a narrow focus that corresponds to the original focus position. There is no variation in focus if the question has non-canonical order. The following are visual representations of these types of focus.





**Figure 15: Narrow Focus on a Fronted Periphery in a Yes/No Question**



**Figure 16: Narrow Focus on a Fronted Argument in a Yes/No Question**

To sum up, this section has dealt with Yes/No Questions that are both canonical and non-canonical in their word order. The ones with canonical word order exhibit flexible focus structure, since the locus of the focus is variable as long as it is within the PFD. In non-canonical interrogative sentences, however, the focus structure is rigid, since the locus of the focus is only found on clause-initial position. Thus, unlike the occurrence of many felicitous replies in the canonical type, only one felicitous response is found in the non-canonical type.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

This paper has shown a rather different approach in the analysis of the different sentence forms in Tagalog. It has provided a motivation for the different forms that exist in the language, in the area of pragmatics.

It has been explained that Tagalog exhibits the three focus types as proposed by Lambrecht (1994), however, the notion of “predicate focus” has to be revised in order to accommodate the peculiarities of the language, which has a rather complex voice system. It has also been shown that although the clause-initial position is particularly favored for narrow focus, it is not always the case that sentence forms with narrow focus always take the clause-initial position for the focus position. The exceptions that are seen are the sentence forms that involve narrow focus on non-PSA constituents. It can thus be said that Tagalog is a language with flexible syntax and flexible focus.

It has also been demonstrated that interrogative sentences feature only narrow focus, and the word order plays a part on the variability of the focus position. Interrogative sentences with canonical word order exhibit variable focus positions, resulting in multiple felicitous replies. Interrogative sentences with non-canonical word order on the other hand restrict the focus position to the clause-initial position. Thus, there can only be one felicitous reply.

All in all, this paper demonstrated that it is insufficient to study a language based on one aspect of it alone. This is added proof for the credibility of RRG as a theory of language in language description, as it provides a different and more holistic viewpoint to the study of language.

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

ABS – Absolutive, AV – Actor voice, CLM – Clause linkage marker, DAT – Dative, ERG – Ergative, EVID – Evidential, GEN – Genitive, IU – Information unit, IMPF – Imperfective, LDP – Left Detached Position, LNK<sub>PF</sub> – Post-focal linker, LNK<sub>PT</sub> – Post-topical linker, NUC – Nucleus, PFD – Potential Focus Domain, PFT – Perfective, PrCS – Pre-Core Slot, PSA – Privileged Syntactic Argument, Q – Question, RRG – Role and Reference Grammar, UV – Undergoer voice

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